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## A NEW HANDBOOK ON VITAL STATISTICS.<sup>1</sup>

For some time there has been a very real and widely recognized need for a practical handbook on vital statistics which would deal especially with the facts of American experience and which would include the more recent methodology of statistics, so far as it is applicable to vital data. Such a need has been met by Prof. Whipple's new volume, *Vital Statistics*. It can be said that the work has been done extremely well, both from the point of view of scientific treatment and from that of its scope and practical utility. Written "for students who are preparing themselves to be public-health officials and for public-health officials who are willing to be students" it will no doubt prove to be a valuable part of the equipment of every health department.

The general plan of the book is a simple exposition of statistical principles and methods, illustrated by and applied to data drawn from American experience. The chapter headings will suggest briefly its scope: Demography (a general introduction to the subject); Statistical arithmetic; Statistical graphics; Enumeration and registration; Population; General death rates, birth rates, marriage rates; Specific death rates; Causes of death; Analysis of death rates; Statistics of particular diseases; Studies of deaths by age periods; Probability; Correlation; Life tables; A commencement chapter; and four appendixes containing a good bibliography, a model State law for morbidity reports, a model State law for the registration of births and deaths, and a table of logarithms of numbers.

The statistical exposition is sufficient to equip the health officer and the student with practically all of the methods used for tabulation, analysis, and presentation of the vital statistics that form the material usually recorded or collected by health departments. While the book does not claim to be an exhaustive compendium of facts the variety of facts that are used as illustrations is large and well chosen, and covers practically all of the conditions ordinarily met with in the experience of the vital statistician in American health departments. It doubtless will also be a valuable introduction to the use of those statistical methods which properly should be employed in epidemiological studies, but which are often conspicuous by their absence or by their faulty application. The author's experience has enabled him to recognize many of the common errors in statistical methods, and to point out the pitfalls in a manner which renders the book extremely helpful.

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<sup>1</sup> *Vital Statistics: An introduction to the Science of Demography.* By George Chandler Whipple, professor of sanitary engineering in Harvard University, member of the public health council, Massachusetts State department of health. xii+517 pp. John Wiley & Sons (Inc.), New York, 1919.